



Senate EEE Committee Hearing on SB354 Hearing Date: February 20, 2025

CPMBS position: FAV

Create workgroup to study creation of MD database of all cemeteries

CPMBS is an all-volunteer nonprofit that since 1992 has advocated for improvement in distressful cemetery situations that occur across Maryland and for needed changes in state law. In 2021-2, I served on the committee that was charged by House & Senate Joint Chairmen to survey citizens and study historic African American Cemeteries and recommend strategies to improve their current situations. One of the major recommendations to come out of the 2022 report is to **"support development of a publicly accessible, map-based data layer dedicated to historic cemeteries throughout Maryland..."**

Some local inventories are available now, with varying types of information on each site and usually not up to date: Nabb Center in Salisbury (records on cemeteries in Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester Counties), Anne Arundel and Baltimore County Genealogical Societies (collect data via death records, tombstone inscriptions, and public programs), Caroline, Allegany, Queen Anne, Talbot, and Garrett Counties (MD Tombstone Project), Find-a-Grave (posts photos and basic information). Our Southern MD counties include cemeteries as part of their Historic Preservation programs. A Frederick County energetic volunteer chronicled known sites. In Central Maryland, Howard, Prince George's, and Montgomery have dedicated planning staff who cover cemetery sites and issues.

My experience in having twice organized and directed volunteer projects to survey all known cemeteries in Montgomery Co confirms their value. The first produced one page with basic known information; the second is now the official Burial Sites Inventory kept by Montgomery County Planning Board on a modern database.

State agencies touch on this subject matter. Maryland Historical Trust's state-wide inventory sometimes notes cemeteries at historic sites. SHA once started a list of cemeteries along our roads. OCO is charged with keeping a list. However, each of these lists keeps unique data. It's time to share for the betterment of all concerned.

A Unified inventory of Maryland cemeteries is crucial to identifying all sites everywhere, documenting them with common data, and making the information accessible. With the passage of SB354, all parties can work together for a database that will be useful for all.

Thank you for your consideration.

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